

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows.

1-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A method for selecting a backend using a directory server mapping tree, comprising:

providing a search criteria by a client application;

initiating a search request by the directory server mapping tree;

searching the directory server mapping tree using the search criteria; and

selecting the backend mapped in the directory server mapping tree that matches the search criteria[[.]],

wherein a node, associated with the backend in the directory server mapping tree, comprises a state indicating availability of the backend.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

traversing the directory server mapping tree for each request initiated by the client application.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7, further comprising:

determining [[a]] the node that most resembles the search criteria provided by the client application.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the node has a state disabling the directory server mapping tree.

12. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the node has an entry in the directory information tree.

13. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
modifying the directory server mapping tree from a plugin without dependence on node representation.
14. (Original) The method of claim 7, further comprising:  
selecting a closest match based on the search criteria, if an exact match is not found.
15. (Original) A method for selecting a backend using a directory server mapping tree, comprising:  
providing a search criteria by a client application;  
initiating a search request by the directory server mapping tree;  
searching the directory server mapping tree using the search criteria;  
selecting the backend mapped in the directory server mapping tree that matches the search criteria;  
traversing the directory server mapping tree for each request initiated by the client application;  
determining a node that most resembles the search criteria provided by the client application;  
modifying the directory server mapping tree from a plugin without dependence on node representation; and  
selecting a closest match based on the search criteria, if an exact match is not found[[.]].  
wherein the node is associated with the backend in the directory server mapping tree and comprises a state indicating availability of the backend.

16. (Original) An apparatus for selecting a backend using a directory server mapping tree, comprising:

means for providing a search criteria by a client application;

means for initiating a search request by the directory server mapping tree;

means for searching the directory server mapping tree using the search criteria; and

means for selecting the backend mapped in the directory server mapping tree that matches the search criteria[[]],

wherein a node, associated with the backend in the directory server mapping tree, comprises a state indicating availability of the backend.

17. (New) The method of claim 7, wherein the state comprises at least one selected from the group consisting of a backend state, a disabled state, referral state, and a referral on update state.